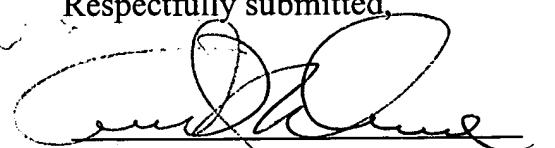


Respectfully submitted,



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AMENDED SPECIFICATION AS OF JANUARY 5, 2003

S P E C I F I C A T I O N

Field Of The Invention

The present invention relates to a decorative balloon holder for securing one or more buoyant balloons in position on a tabletop or the like.

Background Of The Invention

Various devices for holding a buoyant party balloon in a desired position on a tabletop have been proposed, but such products are often not very attractive for use at a festive occasion such as a birthday party, or are relatively expensive to manufacture. The products disclosed in United States patent nos. 5,011,447; 5,016,848; 5024011; 5,035,391; 5,074,510; 5,662,510 or 5,755,419, for example, are manufactured by molding synthetic plastics or comparable techniques and the resulting products can not usually be made festive in appearance without additional expense or bother for the consumer.

Balloon holders formed of a core of weighted mass of compacted sand, or cement and sand mixtures, have been proposed that are wrapped in a festive paper, and such balloon holders have met a need for inexpensive but festively decorated party props to secure buoyant balloons. In an earlier application by one of the inventors, serial no. 565,709 filed May 5, 2000, an attachment for

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securing the string of the balloon is held directly to the core and a decorative layer of material is held around the core to provide a festive balloon holder that can be manufactured inexpensively and yet can hold a balloon securely in place.

Other balloon holders have been used that are formed of a small gift bag that may have a weight such as small lead fishing weights or sand placed in the bottom of the gift bag with decorative tissue paper placed loosely inside to cover the weight. Such balloon holders simulating a gift bag are festive and very desirable for many party occasions where buoyant balloons need to be held in place on a tabletop or the like.

However, such balloon holders simulating a gift bag are typically made individually and are not manufactured readily by automatic techniques nor can they be shipped, stored or displayed in a retail environment satisfactorily. It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide a decorative balloon holder that may simulate a gift bag and yet can be manufactured, stored, shipped and displayed at retail in a manner preserving the decorative appeal of the balloon holder.

Summary of The Invention

According to the present invention, a balloon holder simulating a gift bag is provided by a decorative bag. A core having sufficient weight to hold at least one buoyant balloon in place is positioned within the decorative bag, and decorative

material is secured to the core in a position to conceal the core from casual view. The decorative material is preferably formed from a length of decorative sheet material having its upper portion cut into a series of strips adapted to extend outwardly from the decorative bag and its lower portion held around the periphery of the core. The decorative bag may have handles extending from an upper portion thereof to serve as an attachment for a string of one or more balloons, and the upper portions of the handles may preferably be fixed together.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the core is held to the interior of the decorative bag. In another embodiment of the present invention, an inner liner is fitted within the decorative bag, and the core is held to the interior of the lower portion of the inner liner and the decorative material is held to the interior of the upper periphery of the inner liner.

These and other objects, and advantages and features of the present invention will become apparent from the description given below which is made in conjunction with the following drawing figures:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a balloon holder according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is an exploded view thereof;

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of a balloon holder according to another embodiment of the present invention suitable for a larger

gift bag;

Fig. 4 is an exploded view of the embodiment of Fig. 3.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, a party balloon 10 has a string 12 tied to handles 14 of a decorative gift bag 16 forming part of the balloon holder 18 of the first illustrated embodiment of the present invention. The balloon holder 18 is resting on a tabletop 20 and has sufficient weight to counteract the buoyancy of one or more balloons 10.

Fig. 2 illustrates the construction of the first embodiment of a balloon holder of the present invention, and a core 22 formed of an inexpensive but weighty material such as compressed sand held by an adhesive or a sand, cement and water mixture, is formed into a shape corresponding to the interior of the gift bag. Preferably, the core 22 is trapezoidal in section to taper towards the top of the bag, and a mixture of approximately 72% sand, 24% cement and 4% water has been found satisfactory to hold one or more typical Mylar balloons inflated with helium.

Decorative material extends outwardly from the open top of the gift bag 16, and as illustrated in Fig. 2, the decorative material is formed from a length 24 of decorative sheet material having its upper portion 28 cut into a series of strips 30 adapted to extend outwardly from the open top of the decorative bag 16, as illustrated in Fig. 1. The lower portion 32 of the decorative

material is held around the periphery of the core 22 by orthogonal strips of tape 34 and 36. In this way, the decorative material is held to the core 22 around its generally rectangular periphery to conceal the inner core 22 from casual view by forming a decorative effect about the rectangular opening in the top of the gift bag 16 when the strips 30 are arranged to extend outwardly from the open gift bag 16.

In preferred form, the core 22 may be adhered to the bottom 38 of the gift bag 38 by an adhesive, tape or the like to secure the assembly together, and the upper portions of the handles 14 may be secured together by adhesive, tape, fine line or the like. By holding the decorative material to the core 22, the decorative material will stay in place during shipment, storage or handling. A decorative balloon holder simulating a gift bag is thus suitable for manufacture reliably by automated techniques and can be shipped securely and handled at retail while maintaining its attractiveness to the consumer.

Fig. 3 illustrates an embodiment having a larger gift bag 40. As shown in Fig. 4, an inner liner 41 conforming generally to the shape of the interior of the gift bag 40 is fitted within the gift bag 40. The inner liner may be formed of cardstock and is folded into shape and secured by tape 41a.

The core 42 is preferably wrapped in protective paper 43 secured by tape 44, and the core 42 is held to the interior of the

lower portion 46 of the inner liner 41 by one or more strips of tape 48 engaging the bottom of the wrapped core 42 and the sides of the inner liner 41. The decorative material 50 formed in a manner similar to the decorative material 30 of the first embodiment is held to the interior of the upper periphery 52 of the inner liner 41.

By use of the inner liner 41, a balloon weight formed of a larger size gift bag will have support to maintain its decorative shape and assemblage during handling and shipment. As in the first embodiment, the upper portions of the handles 14 may be secured together by adhesive, tape, fine line or the like to complete the assemblage.

These and other objects, advantages and features of the present invention will be understood from the detailed description made above; and it is understood that the present invention is not limited by any details set forth above, but by the appended claims.